

Listing of the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) An element for a consumer product, the element comprising a carrier of a metal or metal alloy and an outer layer, the outer layer formed by a sol-gel process and comprising a polymer material with an inorganic main chain, wherein at least a region of said outer layer has a visual appearance different from the visual appearance of surrounding regions of said outer layer, wherein the visual appearance of the surrounding regions of the outer layer is dull-translucent, wherein the at least a region forms a marking which is visible to the human eye.

2. (previously amended) An element as claimed in claim 1, wherein said at least a region is integral with the surrounding regions of said outer layer.

3. (previously amended) An element as claimed in claim 1, wherein the different visual appearance of said at least one region forming said marking is achieved by laser radiation.

4. (cancelled)

5. (cancelled)

6. (previously amended) An element as claimed in claim 1, the outer layer further comprising at least one filler material.

7. (previously amended) An element as claimed in claim 6, the outer layer further comprising fluorided hydrocarbons.

8. (previously amended) An element as claimed in claim 1, comprising a further layer of polymer material with an inorganic main chain, wherein said further layer surrounds the at least one region which forms said marking in said outer layer.

9. (previously amended) An element as claimed in claim 1, wherein said inorganic main chain has organic lateral branches.

10. (previously amended) An element as claimed in claim 9, wherein said organic lateral branches comprise methyl groups.

11. (cancelled)

12. (cancelled)

13. (currently amended) An element as claimed in claim 241, wherein ~~the hard material is selected from metal and metal alloy,~~ and the carrier further comprising an anodized layer which supports said outer layer.

14. (cancelled)

15. (withdrawn) A method of marking an outer layer (3; 23; 43) comprising a polymer material with an inorganic main

chain and having visual properties, which method comprises the provision of changes visible to the human eye in at least one of said visual properties in at least one region (9; 29; 49) of said outer layer (3; 23; 43), whereby said at least one region (9; 29; 49) forms a visible marking (4, 5) in said outer layer (3; 23; 43) when viewed frontally.

16. (withdrawn) A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the outer layer (3; 23; 43) in which said marking (4, 5) is provided was obtained through the application of a sol-gel substance onto a carrier (2; 22; 42) and through the conversion of said sol-gel substance into said polymer material with an inorganic main chain.

17. (withdrawn) A method as claimed in claim 16, wherein the sol-gel substance comprises an alkoxy silicate as the monomer for the formation of said polymer material.

18. (withdrawn) A method as claimed in any one of the claims 15 to 17, wherein said changes in at least one of said visual properties are obtained through a local energy supply to said at least one region (9; 29; 49) which forms said marking (4, 5).

19. (withdrawn) A method as claimed in claim 18, wherein said local energy supply is provided by a laser beam.

20. (withdrawn) A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein a substantial portion of said laser beam penetrates said outer layer (3) and is absorbed by a carrier which supports said outer layer (3).

21. (withdrawn) A method as claimed in claim 19 or 20, wherein said laser beam is a pulsating laser beam, and wherein the pulsation is carried out with a pulse duration shorter than 30 ns, preferably shorter than 20 ns.

22. (withdrawn) A method as claimed in claim 19 or 20, wherein said laser beam has a wavelength of between 800 and 1600 nm, preferably between 1000 and 1100 nm.

23. (withdrawn) A method as claimed in any one of the claims 19 to 21, wherein the laser has a wavelength at which the outer layer shows a comparatively strong absorption.

24. (cancelled)